

Department of English and Writing Studies

Critical Race Theory¹
English 3204G-001/Women's Studies 3324G-001
Winter 2021

Instructor: Dr. Jason Sandhar
Email: jsunder@uwo.ca

TA: Judy Joo-Ae Bae
Email: jbae66@uwo.ca

Course Location: Online/Zoom

Course Date/Time: Mondays 4:30

Prerequisites: At least 60% in 1.0 of English 1020-1999 or permission of the Department.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Course Description

“Critical race theory is the most exciting development in contemporary legal studies,” writes Kimberlé Crenshaw. Indeed, the field’s forceful rebuke of classical liberalism—which heralded a seismic shift in how scholars theorize the intersections of race, gender, and power—marked a turning point in the culture wars of the 1980s and 90s. In this course, we will link the classic texts that defined the field with fresh interventions by theorists and cultural figures including Beyoncé Knowles, Giller Prize-winning novelist Esi Edugyan, and Western alumna Eternity Martis. By bringing culture and theory into dialogue, we will investigate how CRT equips us to navigate urgent questions of race, gender, and power amidst a global resurgence of xenophobia, populism, and misogyny.

Objectives:

By the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- define and identify “critical race theory” as a discrete intervention in critical theory and legal scholarship
- articulate how CRT challenges and critiques classical liberalism
- apply CRT’s theoretical interventions to contemporary problematics of race, gender, and power through relevant cultural examples
- connect CRT to new theoretical/social interventions including (but not limited to) queer theory, disability studies, and Indigenous resistance

Course Materials

Required Texts:

Esi Edugyan. *Washington Black*

Jamil Jivani. *Why Young Men*

Ibram X. Kendi. *How to be an Anti-Racist*

Eternity Martis. *They Said this Would be Fun*

¹ This syllabus is subject to change. Any/all changes will be announced ahead of time, in class.

NB! All of the other assigned readings will be posted on OWL

Methods of Evaluation

The grade for the course will be arrived at as follows:

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| • Seminar presentation (20 min.) | 20% |
| • Seminar self-assessment | 5% |
| • Short response papers (2 pp; 2 total) | 10% (5% each) |
| • Annotated Bibliography
(min. 5 citations) | 15% |
| • Final paper | 35% |
| • Participation | 15% |

Seminar Presentation and Group Assessment (20 min.)

Presentation: In groups of 3, you will deliver a 20 minute presentation on the week's readings. While you are required to both **EXPLAIN** and **ANALYZE** the source material you look at, the content and style of the presentation is up to you (viz. you can deliver a seminar-style paper, an interactive lecture, a panel, a multimedia installation, etc.). You are not required to do additional research.

Group Assessment: For the following week, please submit a 1-2 page report that:

1. briefly describes how your group developed your project;
2. assesses how you and your peers worked as a team.
 - a. You might wish to consider such issues as team dynamics or unexpected challenges. What worked? What surprised you about the experience? How did your team negotiate the inevitable challenges that come with collaboration and presentation development?

Again, the assessment is *due one week after* your presentation.

Response Papers (2 total; 2pp. each)

Due Feb 1; March 1

Please write a *short* (2 pages MAX), informal response to one of the course readings we have thus far covered. Since you do not have a lot of space, I suggest that you use your two pages to critically mull over something in the reading that has caught your attention. While the response paper is not a formal essay, you may use it as an opportunity to develop ideas for your final written assignment.

Annotated Bibliography for Final Paper (5-10 scholarly citations)

Due March 15

While you may draw on course readings for your final paper topic, please seek out a minimum of *five scholarly sources* for the annotated bibliography. If you are working with a case study from popular cultural, include the entry in addition to the five scholarly sources.

Final Paper (10-12 pp)

Due April 5

Please submit a research essay on a topic of your choice that engages with the course themes.

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>.

Timetable

Unit I: Foundations

January 11

Presentation sign-up

Frantz Fanon. "The Fact of Blackness." (Please read ahead of our first meeting)

January 18

Kimberlé Crenshaw. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics."

Derrick Bell. "The Space Traders."

Unit II: Intersectionalities

January 25

Patricia Hill Collins. "Intersectionality's Definitional Dilemmas."

Jennifer Nash. "re-thinking intersectionality."

February 1

Chandra Talpade Mohanty. "Under Western Eyes."

Beyoncé Knowles. "Flawless."

In-class screening: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. "We Should all be Feminists."

SHORT PAPER NO. 1 DUE

Unit III: Migration I Borders

February 8

Lisa Lowe. "Introduction: The Intimacies of Four Continents" **OPTIONAL**

Edugyan. *Washington Black*

February 15

Reading Week

No assigned readings, but I do suggest you spend some time with the Martis as we'll discuss it next week.

Unit IV Confronting Institutional Racism

February 22

Martis. *They Said this Would be Fun.*

Memoir workshop featuring Eternity Martis

March 1

Martis. *They Said this Would be Fun.*

Kendi. *How to be an Anti-Racist.*

SHORT PAPER NO. 2 DUE.

Unit VI: Critical Interventions

March 8

Kendi, *How to be an Anti-Racist.*

Film: *Black Snake Killaz: a #NoDAPL Story.* Please watch before we meet on March 8

March 15

Selections from [Summary of the Final Report of the TRC](#): pp. 37-58; 71-121.
Letter from Russ Moses.
ANNOTATED BIBLIO DUE.

March 22

From komagatamarujourney.ca: "The Incident"; "The Komagata Maru Stories"

March 29

Jivani. *Why Young Men*.

April 5

Jivani. *Why Young Men*.
FINAL PAPER DUE.

Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence:

Students will have up to two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student's final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence, unless noted on the syllabus. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- for exams scheduled by the Office of the Registrar (e.g., December and April exams)
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student's final grade,
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are *not* met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact their Faculty academic counselling office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. **All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty.**

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see:

[Policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#)

For the **Student Medical Certificate (SMC)**, see:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

Religious Accommodation:

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

Plagiarism Checking:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western:

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.